



Security Council

Distr.: General
25 February 2021

Original: English

Letter dated 24 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia; and Ms. Rita Laranjinha, Managing Director of the European External Action Service, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, Tunisia — on behalf of Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines — the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in Somalia” convened on Monday, 22 February 2021. A statement was also delivered by His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Barbara Woodward**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, James Swan**

Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity to update the Security Council once again on the situation in Somalia.

I am pleased to appear jointly with my dear colleague Ambassador Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. Let me take this opportunity at the outset to pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice of the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007 alongside courageous Somali forces.

Today's meeting of the Council is timely in the light of the significant developments in Somalia in recent weeks and over the past few days. Growing political tensions threaten Somalia's State-building progress, and even its security, unless they are resolved through dialogue and compromise in the interests of the country. Unfortunately, instead we are seeing increased brinkmanship, pressure tactics and tests of strength that can only heighten risks.

The political stand-off among key Somali leaders has blocked the implementation of the electoral model agreed by the President of the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member state leaders on 17 September 2020. That model was formally endorsed by both houses of Parliament and supported by all other major political actors, but its implementation is in dispute. I will return to this point.

Tensions over electoral implementation have now been compounded by questions raised by some political figures over the legitimacy of the President's mandate following the expiry of his constitutional term on 8 February. The Government cites an October parliamentary resolution permitting the President to remain, but that is contested by others.

Meanwhile, on the morning of 19 February, a day of protests announced by the opposition Council of Presidential Candidates Union, several violent incidents were reported. Although full details are unconfirmed, these incidents reportedly included armed exchanges between Government security personnel and security teams employed by the opposition, as well as recourse to live fire by Government forces to disperse protesters.

Public communication from key leaders has become increasingly polemical and confrontational, revealing the frustration, mistrust and sense of grievance felt by many. Hence this is a tense moment in Somalia, as both rhetoric and actions are escalating.

In the light of the above, let me briefly recap recent efforts to move forward with the implementation of the 17 September electoral model.

At the invitation of the Federal Government, Federal Government of Somalia and federal member state leaders met in Dhusamareb from 2 to 6 February and made progress, but reached no final agreement on the contentious issues, namely, the composition of the electoral management bodies, the modalities for selecting representatives from "Somaliland" in federal institutions and the management of elections in the Gedo region of Jubaland state.

Subsequently, the Federal Government convened a technical committee of senior ministers from the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states, who met in Baidoa on 15 and 16 February. The committee announced that it

had arrived at technical solutions for the contentious issues, reaffirmed commitment to the 30 per cent quota for women in the electoral process and noted the need for a revised but short new electoral calendar.

On the basis of the committee's work, the Federal Government called for a Federal Government of Somalia-federal member state leaders' summit to be held in Mogadishu on 18 and 19 February. Yet events of recent days disrupted these plans, and the leaders of Jubaland and Puntland have so far regrettably declined to join the Federal Government of Somalia and other federal member states for a summit. Along with other partners, we continue efforts to understand and address the concerns of the two leaders so that they may join the process to advance the 17 September agreement.

In the light of this worrisome impasse, in recent days I have worked closely, alongside other regional and international partners, to engage Federal Government of Somalia and federal member state leaders, key political figures and civil society representatives to urge a way forward based on dialogue and compromise in the national interests. The message from partners has been clear that there should be no partial elections, no parallel processes and no unilateral actions by Somali leaders. Such approaches would lead only to greater division and risk of confrontation.

Let me be clear: I remain convinced that the consensus-based 17 September model offers the best available option to proceed quickly to an electoral process for selecting members of Parliament, senators and a president. This would minimize further delays in Somalia's four-year transition cycle, ensure that the chosen national leaders have a clear mandate and are widely accepted and allow the country to turn its attention from the current political competition to other vital national priorities in the interests of its people.

To move forward on this path, it is imperative that Somali leaders use all available channels for dialogue and consultation, including contacts with a wide range of political stakeholders and influential civil society figures so that their important voices are heard. To build trust in the process, it will also be necessary to ensure that the management and oversight of the agreed electoral process are as impartial and independent as possible and subject to regular monitoring. Core political freedoms, including those of speech, assembly, organization and access to media, must be ensured. And communication among the main actors — especially the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member state leaders — must continue on a regular and frequent basis to minimize future misunderstandings and resolve problems before they escalate.

The United Nations and other international partners stand ready to walk with Somalis on this path forward by providing good offices or a forum for dialogue, offering technical assistance to the process and monitoring the implementation of commitments, should the Somali parties find these contributions useful.

The longer national political attention continues to be focused on the current impasse over the holding elections, the greater the negative impact will be on other priorities, such as advancing security and economic reforms, finalizing the constitution and pursuing the development agenda.

Al-Shabaab continues to pose the primary threat to the security of the country. Al-Shabaab has increased its operational tempo since August 2020, and the beginning of 2021 has seen a new peak in the number of attacks, including more person-borne and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, targeting Government officials and key figures in Somali society.

Important military gains were made by the Somali security forces, backed by AMISOM, in the Lower Shabelle region in early 2019 and again in early 2020, and

those are now being consolidated to enable further progress against Al-Shabaab in other areas. The United Nations Support Office in Somalia remained steadfast in the delivery of support to AMISOM and eligible Somali forces throughout this period despite the complications of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

Meanwhile, preparatory work to advance the security transition in Somalia in 2021 has been completed, as requested by the Security Council. The Federal Government organized meetings of the Security and Justice Committee and the Somalia Partnership Forum in early December, thereby advancing the comprehensive approach to security and the Mutual Accountability Framework. We encourage the Government to continue those efforts and to hold the force generation conference announced by the Prime Minister as soon as possible. The Council-mandated independent assessment of the security situation and the role of international partners was submitted to the Council on 8 January, and the Somalia transition plan was updated and presented by the Somali Government to security partners and the African Union Peace and Security Council in early February. Those are all important elements to advance the security transition this year and lay the foundations for further progress in the future.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains dire. The number of people in need of assistance will increase from 5.2 million persons last year to an estimated 5.9 million persons in 2021. That is the result of increasing food insecurity, climatic disasters, the worst desert locust infestation in decades and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, in recent weeks we have seen a renewed spike in COVID-19 cases in Somalia, which will only exacerbate the already difficult humanitarian situation. Somalia is eligible for the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access programme. The United Nations, in close collaboration with the Somali authorities, will ensure that the first batch of vaccines is effectively distributed to front-line workers and vulnerable groups across the country. While we are deeply grateful for the generous donor contributions in 2020, the humanitarian needs will continue to be high, and we again appeal for donor support to the humanitarian response plan for 2021, for which \$1.09 billion is requested.

The United Nations family also continues to work with the Somali authorities and partners on longer-term solutions to those recurrent humanitarian shocks. For example, our Mission's environmental adviser is engaging the Government to develop climate-related policies and strategies, as well as practical responses to flood and drought cycles impacted by climatic conditions.

While these quarterly briefings typically focus on the latest political, security and humanitarian developments, we must always remain mindful that enduring positive change for Somalis will require institution-building, improvements in governance, including through constitutional reform, investment in health and education, greater participation by women, young people and marginalized groups and other long-term reforms. The United Nations in Somalia continues its work with Somalis in all those areas, knowing that it will take persistence and perseverance.

It is imperative that those larger future goals be borne in mind by Somalia's political leaders. The Somali people have waited a long time to see progress, and it remains fragile. That is why I urge all Somalia's political leaders to pull back from confrontation and avoid risky winner-take-all tactics. Instead, this is a time to pursue dialogue and compromise so as to reach an inclusive and credible political agreement to hold elections as soon as possible based on the 17 September model.

Annex II

Briefing by the Special Representative of the African Union Commission Chairperson for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, Francisco Caetano José Madeira

I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on Somalia once again. Let me start by congratulating the United Kingdom on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of February.

Today's meeting is taking place in the aftermath of the events of 19 and 20 February, which resulted in the eruption of armed clashes in Mogadishu as Somali political leaders struggle to unlock the current political impasse and allow the country to hold peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, demanded restraint and urged Somali stakeholders to refrain from acts that may escalate tensions or lead to further violence. He reiterated the importance and absolute necessity for elections as a means for the renewal and reaffirmation of people's trust and confidence in their leaders and for the consolidation of the peace, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

The armed clashes of 19 and 20 February have died down and stopped, but the political tension and the underlying causes that led to those clashes have not. It is therefore important that Somali stakeholders return to the negotiating table, remain focused and continue with their dialogue, guided by the spirit of constructiveness, compromise and consensus, so as to agree on a credible process that can, in a peaceful and conducive environment, deliver a free and transparent election in conformity with the 17 September agreement.

In that regard, a great deal has already been achieved. The leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, the two chambers of the national Parliament, the Council of Presidential Candidates, the business community and the civil society organizations have all recognized and endorsed the 17 September agreement. The 19 and 20 February clashes did not question the validity of the 17 September agreement. The recently held Baidoa technical discussions, to which all the federal member states sent experts to participate, came up with proposals that all the participants unanimously adopted and recommended that the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states meet, endorse and agree on a road map for elections.

It is important that the leaders come up with a specific date to meet and look into those proposals, which hold the key to overcoming the technical hurdles that have impeded the 17 September agreement from being implemented and elections from being delivered. But the events of 19 and 20 February took place after the Baidoa proposals had already been released and a date for a meeting of the leaders to look into them had been proposed. That meeting did not take place. A space must be created to carefully look into that, and we, as international partners, should support the Somali stakeholders in that endeavour. Maintaining channels of communication and dialogue remain vital tools in that effort.

Despite the challenges and delays I have just mentioned, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continues to deliver on its election-related responsibilities, particularly with regard to the provision of election security, training and technical support. In delivering those tasks, there has been enhanced and more complementary collaboration and coordination between the AMISOM police and the Somali police, the AMISOM civilian component and their counterparts in Government departments, journalists and civil society and the AMISOM military

and the Somali National Army (SNA). That multifaceted interaction and collaboration will be very important and necessary during the actual election process.

With regard to security, in general the situation remains volatile, as Al-Shabaab is strategically positioning itself with a view to maximizing its capacity to thwart the upcoming electoral process. In that regard, it places a particular focus on Mogadishu, where it continues to unleash its deadly attacks.

Beyond Mogadishu and in AMISOM areas of operations, we continue to observe three emerging tactics of Al-Shabaab, with the obvious goal of destabilizing the elections in the federal member states.

First, Al-Shabaab has been mobilizing forces as part of its plans to retake key locations in Lower and Middle Shabelle so as to facilitate its deadly operations in the Banaadir region.

Secondly, particularly in Bay and Bakool, Al-Shabaab has placed emphasis on conducting disruptive operations, targeting humanitarian aid convoys and, in some cases, cargo aeroplanes carrying goods and supplies.

Thirdly, Al-Shabaab is extending its tentacles and increasingly making its presence felt in Galmudug. That has led to the group intensifying its attacks in that member state in recent months, such as the Gaalkacyo Stadium attack last December.

However, despite the coronavirus disease pandemic and the limitations imposed by seasonal rains, we have been able to contain Al-Shabaab's activities through enhanced collaboration and joint operations with the Somali national forces and allow life to evolve in relative security in most population centres across AMISOM areas of operations.

In implementing its transition obligations under Operation Badbaado 1, with the exception of the capture of Basra town, AMISOM has successfully completed its transition tasks in Lower Shabelle. The completion of Operation Badbaado 1 will now allow AMISOM to commence transition operations in Middle Shabelle. That new phase of operations will be greatly enhanced by the recent deployment of four helicopters from the Republic of Uganda.

In accordance with resolution 2520 (2020), I can report that AMISOM has also commenced implementing its reconfiguration, as agreed at the joint AMISOM-SNA sector commanders conference in October 2020, with key tasks endorsed at the Operations Coordination Committee, also in October 2020, and widely welcomed by international partners at the European Union security event on Somalia in November 2020.

The African Union remains committed to working closely and in coordination and complementarity with the Somali security forces with a view to further strengthening and expediting their taking over of security responsibilities from AMISOM. It is in that context that the African Union Peace and Security Council in its recent communiqué took note of the progress of the Somali transition plan review. In the area of operations, the success of the transition plan will very much depend on our capacity to expedite the generation of a well-trained, well-equipped, well-supported and capable Somali army. Without a very clear, resourced and implementable force generation plan, the discussions that we have been having and the decisions that we have taken will be compromised.

The African Union strongly believes that the holding of a force generation conference as soon as practically possible will address the full range of requirements for the success of the ongoing transition operations. It would also allow international

partners to identify resources to ensure that the implementation of the Somali transition plan does not suffer further delays.

We also believe that, as we continue to support and implement the transition, it must be our collective responsibility to realistically and transparently assess the conditions on the ground. In that connection, as the Council is now aware, the African Union is in the process of conducting its own independent assessment to decide on the future of AMISOM in Somalia after 2021. That assessment will also allow AMISOM to further reconfigure so as to better support Somalia's security and broader stabilization requirements.

Later this week, the Security Council will review AMISOM's mandate. Since the deployment of AMISOM in 2007, the Mission has continued to achieve its strategic objectives. That has come at a huge human cost. That sacrifice by AMISOM, together with that of the Somali security forces, has over the past 14 years resulted in the creation of a physical space where life evolves in relative safety, political dialogue and reconciliation can take place and governance, humanitarian relief and the extension of State authority can become a reality across Somalia. The renewal of the AMISOM mandate must take into account the prevailing political and security realities on the ground and the need for us all not to put those hard-won gains at risk.

Annex III

Briefing by the Managing Director of the European External Action Service, Rita Laranjinha

I thank you, Madam President, for the invitation to make this statement on behalf of the European Union (EU). Today we have four messages to deliver.

First, it is critical to put politics at the centre. The constitutional four-year mandate of the President of Somalia ended on 8 February without a political agreement on how elections should be conducted. That is a risk for Somalia and, if not urgently addressed, it will become a risk to regional security. We urge the Somali leaders to resume dialogue and work in a spirit of compromise to overcome the last political hurdles to inclusive elections as soon as possible, respecting the agreement that they reached on 17 September 2020. Together with other partners, we have called for calm and restraint by all parties following armed tensions in Mogadishu over the weekend. All the parties must come together without delay to reduce further tensions and seek to break the current political deadlock over the holding of elections. The people of Somalia deserve the full dedication of their leaders to their safety, well-being and progress.

Any progress on the security side can only underpin a political settlement, not deliver it. Conversely, sustainable security relies on a political settlement. The Government and the federal member states must reconcile and work together to achieve the best prospect for stability by addressing the root causes as well as the symptoms. If Somalia's leaders fail to come to political arrangements, Al-Shabaab and other spoilers will benefit. The gains made to move Somalia to debt relief also risk being squandered.

Now is therefore the time for us, together, to reinforce our commitment towards a more comprehensive political and stabilization approach. Only that can be a meaningful basis for allowing space for Somalia to lead its security post-2021 and for the African Union (AU), neighbours and partners to continue providing support.

Secondly, we need to continue progress on security. Against the backdrop of multiple drivers of conflict within Somalia and across the region, we welcome the progress made in the Federal Government of Somalia-led review of the Somali transition plan in collaboration with international partners. We encourage the Federal Government to finalize its review and formally endorse the Somali transition plan at the National Security Council, with the full participation of the Federal Government and the high-level Security and Justice Committee.

Through the process of reviewing the Somali transition plan, Somalia has communicated its strategic vision. Having a plan for the future that shows a credible path to transition to Somali-led security is the best way to ensure predictability and stability for Somalia and the region, as well as to tie down donor support. However, to continue to support that ongoing process, we need to be able to understand how the Government will extend control across Somalia and what resources will be required. In that regard, we look forward to considering further details at the forthcoming force generation conference, as well as through the revised concept of operations, concerning the ways and means required to realize the plan's ambitions.

The vision set out in the revised Somali transition plan is a testament to the success of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in rebuilding Somali security and the capability of its security forces. It means that, over the coming years, the Somali authorities will increasingly need support to enable their own activities rather than rely on external forces. The revised Somali transition plan is clear that a reconfigured AU mission is best-placed to provide that support, and also recognizes that a reconfigured mission will need to retain the ability to fight Al-Shabaab.

We further acknowledge the conclusion of the independent assessment mandated by the Security Council. Together, those milestones give us an indication of the various options to boost the current security and State-building operation. They offer a better view of what is required to counter the threat from Al-Shabaab and the various other challenges to security and State-building.

Bolstering the capacity of Somalia's security and governance actors in order to enable them to assume the responsibility for protecting their people must remain a key objective of all of Somalia's partners. However, it is essential to address key questions and details. With regard to force generation, how many is sufficient and for what purpose? With regard to training, who will conduct it, to what standard and for what purpose? And how will bilateral engagement support the overall vision? A reinforced mechanism for bringing the different Somali actors and international security providers together to ensure a joined approach seems essential.

A more balanced approach should further emphasize the prevention and countering of violent extremism and organized crime, including financing, as a complement to the military engagement — both on land and in the maritime domain — to counter the evolving threat. Pivoting to a more comprehensive approach to security and stabilization also requires strengthening basic service provision, justice, law enforcement and public administration, especially public financial management.

The EU remains committed to Somalia's State-building efforts. Since 2014, our support has amounted to almost €1.6 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. Our investment in the security sector has been substantial, totalling more than €2.1 billion to AMISOM since 2007. We have secured €100 million for AMISOM until the end of June 2021. In parallel, we have scaled up our support to provide non-lethal equipment to the Somali security forces engaged in transition operations alongside AMISOM — amounting to €40 million for 2019-2020. This has been implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

The EU has also extended for another two years its Common Security and Defence Policy missions, the European Union Capacity-Building Mission in Somalia and the European Union Training Mission for Somalia, which continue to support the capacity-building of Somali security forces, both on land and at sea. Additionally, Operation Atalanta's mandate was expanded to include the secondary executive and non-executive tasks of countering trafficking in weapons and narcotic drugs and monitoring various illegal activities at sea. With those adjustments, Operation Atalanta will support the United Nations arms embargo on Somalia and the ongoing fight against Al-Shabaab and its funding streams, while at the same time maintaining its core effort to counter piracy and protect the World Food Programme and other vulnerable shipments to Somalia.

Furthermore, the EU's contribution of €23 million to the Joint Police Programme, also implemented by UNOPS, complements donor contributions from Germany and the United Kingdom. Additionally, our support of the United Nations Mine Action Service is enhancing local resilience and capacity to address the problem of explosive hazards in Somalia.

Our third message is linked to the need to rebuild the former regional political consensus that existed when AMISOM was launched 10 years ago. The future stability of Somalia lies in robust and honest political engagement, both within Somalia and in the region. It should be aimed at reaching a lasting political solution with the continued engagement from regional players to serve as a positive enabler. That requires regional and multilateral cooperation, and we welcome the leadership role of the AU in that connection, in close coordination with the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. The EU will continue to support broader engagement among partners across the wider region and wholeheartedly encourages more dialogue in that regard.

Our fourth and last message is about the work ahead in 2021 and the need to define a post-2021 security framework. In building and supporting Somalia's vision, as expressed in the Somali transition plan, we need to take into account the situation on the ground. There is broad agreement within the international community that continued support from an international mission is necessary, that more accountability from all stakeholders is needed and that the AU is best placed to continue to provide that. Strong political engagement by the AU in Somalia will be necessary to support delivery on both political reforms and security.

We recognize that, until its full drawdown, the AU will have to continue to play an important role in supporting the security transition process. Collective efforts are more needed than ever for peace and security in Somalia and the region, as well as to safeguard the progress made over the years.

That progress has been possible only due to the sacrifices made by Africa's sons and daughters. Allow me therefore to pay tribute to the ultimate price paid by the African troop- and police-contributing countries of AMISOM for the sake of peace and security in Somalia.

The discussions today in the Security Council on the AMISOM mandate create an opportunity to generate a shared vision and should lead us further to explore national, regional and international expectations for Somalia's political and security landscape post-2021.

The steps that will be needed in 2021 to prepare for the implementation of the Somali transition plan, with a revision to the concept of operations and a reconfigured AU mission in 2022, must be clear. The EU considers that the renewed AMISOM mandate in the Security Council should support the Mission in this reconfiguration process. It should allow the AU the necessary time, space and ownership to consider and act upon the conclusions of the various processes, such as the revised Somali transition plan and the independent assessment, as well as its own forthcoming analysis and assessment.

We therefore encourage the AU to use this opportunity to set out its own vision and the requirements and commitments needed to ensure that a new mandate contributes to building Somalia's ability to manage its own security in the medium term. With the appropriate political will, that will help ensure that Somalis take leadership and ownership of the country's recovery efforts.

The AU's independent assessment and the Peace and Security Council mandate renewal in May should set a direction that can be captured in a new Council draft resolution at the end of December 2021. The EU therefore welcomes a 10-month renewal of the mandate to allow space for discussions on the shape of a post-2021 mission to take place.

With regard to the EU, while we continue to call on all partners for a more balanced donor structure, the EU's commitment to support peace, stability and development in Somalia is long-term. Discussions with our member States on a follow-up instrument to fund African peace support operations beyond 2021 are ongoing. That process will be informed by the parameters for Somalia's security architecture post-2021, which are yet to be determined in more detail.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Dai Bing**

[Original: Chinese]

I wish to thank Mr. Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, and Ms. Laranjinha, Managing Director of the European External Action Service, for their briefings, and welcome the Foreign Minister of Somalia to today's meeting.

The current situation in Somalia is at a critical juncture. The parties in Somalia have continued to negotiate regarding the elections, while the international community is actively preparing for the security transition in Somalia. At the same time, the security and humanitarian situation in Somalia remains very fragile. China strongly condemns the recent multiple violent terrorist attacks in Somalia and expresses deep condolences to the victims. I would now like to highlight the following three points.

First, no efforts should be spared to maintain political stability in Somalia. Despite recent efforts by the parties in Somalia to maintain the momentum for dialogue on the elections, relevant differences have dragged on for a long time without a solution, which not only hinders efforts to rebuild the country but also leads to political instability and even deterioration of the security situation. China is concerned about the recent violent incidents in Mogadishu. We call on all parties in Somalia to exercise restraint, continue dialogue, show flexibility and find a proper solution to the political deadlock as soon as possible, so that the elections can be held sooner in order to restore political stability in Somalia and create a favourable environment for focusing their efforts on national construction so as to avoid a reversal of earlier gains.

Secondly, the security situation in Somalia needs continuous improvement. Somalia will need to rely on itself above all to achieve peace and stability in the country. The international community has already reached consensus on Somalia's gradual assumption of its security responsibilities, while affirming that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) remains critical in the current situation. All parties should follow the principle of a Somali-led, and -owned solution in order to reach an agreement on a steady and orderly transfer of security responsibilities. AMISOM is an African Union (AU) peacekeeping operation authorized by the Security Council. A strong partnership between the United Nations and the AU is essential to the success of AMISOM. The roles of the United Nations, the African Union, troop-contributing countries and the host country are all critical. China encourages the parties to improve communication on the renewal of the AMISOM mandate in order to find a solution acceptable to all.

Thirdly, we need to help Somalia cope with humanitarian and development challenges. The compound effect of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, floods and locust infestations have exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Somalia. About one third of its population is in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The international community should scale up its assistance to alleviate the difficult situation of the Somali people and actively help Somalia develop its economy to improve people's livelihoods. China welcomes the efforts of the Somali Government to meet the decision point requirements to achieve debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and expects the international community to provide a more lenient environment for Somalia's development.

China has always helped Somalia achieve peace and development. We recently donated multiple batches of supplies to Somalia in order to help the country strengthen its judicial capacities. We will also provide COVID-19 vaccine assistance to Somalia upon request. China will continue to work with the international community to make contributions, within its means, to peace and reconstruction in Somalia.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I join others in thanking the briefers for their insightful overviews. I would also like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Somalia to today's discussion.

Estonia is very concerned about the deteriorating security situation and strongly condemns the violence in Mogadishu. I call on all parties to exercise restraint and calm, as violence will only exacerbate the existing problems and fuel the growing grievances of the Somali people, as well as open up opportunities for terrorist groups and spoilers to exploit. The recent spike in Al-Shabaab activity is a stark reminder that there is no room for error and that we cannot let the political impasse derail our critical progress.

It is therefore crucial for the Somali leaders to urgently come together to put the interests of the Somali people first. The leaders need to arrive at a broadly accepted understanding within the framework of 17 September agreement and hold elections without further delays. I welcome the 16 February agreement of the technical committee as a step in the right direction and call on the leaders to act on it. Holding peaceful and inclusive elections is also important to renew the legitimacy of the Somali federal institutions, which is necessary not only to safeguard immediate stability in the country but also to build long-term sustainable peace in Somalia.

In the upcoming elections, Estonia urges the Somali authorities to implement the 30 per cent female quota and ensure that marginalized groups, including youth, are included. I also call on them to protect the freedom of expression and the press. Additionally, Estonia underlines the need to put in place measures and institutions to protect human rights. In that regard, I reiterate the call to establish the independent national commission on human rights, which has a key role to play in promoting and protecting human rights.

The high level of conflict-related sexual violence remains very concerning. It is crucial to hold the perpetrators of sexual violence accountable. I therefore urge the Federal Government to take steps to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence by enacting the 2018 sexual offences bill. Estonia also calls for the full implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

In order to ensure that Somalia is making progress in its democratization process, I strongly support the development of an agreed pathway to one-person, one-vote elections in 2024 and 2025. On that note, I also fully support the institutionalization of regular consultations between the Federal Government and the federal member states so that they can make progress on a number of State-building priorities.

Estonia is encouraged by the recent progress towards the security transition in Somalia, and we welcome the independent assessment as well as the updated Somali transition plan. That momentum must continue to build the necessary stepping-stones for Somalia to assume full responsibility for its security by the end of 2023, as set out in the updated Somalia transition plan. However, for that to happen, serious work and planning must commence now. That includes holding the force-generation conference and renewing the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to reflect the changing situation on the ground. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the commitment and sacrifice of AMISOM forces in Somalia alongside the courageous Somali security forces in order to defeat Al-Shabaab.

Estonia is deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation, especially about the projection that the humanitarian situation is set to worsen this year. According to the recently issued humanitarian response plan, \$1.09 billion will be required in 2021. I call on the international community to provide the necessary funding to save lives in Somalia.

In conclusion, the coming months will be crucial for Somalia, and allow me to reiterate Estonia's full support for the country and its people.

Annex VI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst**

[Original: English and French]

I thank today's speakers for their briefings and their comprehensive presentations.

France is very concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Somalia. France strongly condemns the violence taking place since 18 February in Mogadishu. These clashes are taking place in a context marked by political deadlock and a lack of prospects for holding elections. The elections, which were to lead to the appointment of a new Parliament and a new President by this past 8 February, remain fundamental to the legitimacy of Somali institutions.

France therefore calls on all parties to exercise restraint, as violence carries the risk of clan clashes and plays in favour of terrorist groups. The international community cannot allow the efforts of all in the fight against Al-Shabaab and for the consolidation of the Somali State to be hindered.

It is therefore very important to overcome the current political impasse as soon as possible. In that regard, France takes note of the inter-Somali technical agreement of 16 February on the organization of elections. This is a first step in the right direction. We urge the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to reach a political agreement so that elections can take place without delay, all across the states of the federation and by consensus. The long-term existence of the Somali federation is at stake.

In that regard, I recall the importance of the inclusivity of the electoral process. The full participation of women as voters and candidates must remain a priority, with respect for the 30 per cent quota for Parliament. We also call for the participation of youth, in accordance with resolution 2535 (2020), on the youth, peace and security agenda.

These inter-Somali discussions should lead to the strengthening of the rule of law and consolidation of democracy in Somalia, with the support of the United Nations and Special Representative James Swan, whose work I commend. The adoption of the constitutional review is equally crucial for building peace.

France remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in Somalia. France expresses its support for the civilian population, whose plight has been further exacerbated not only by the coronavirus disease pandemic but also by extreme weather conditions, from the locust crisis to the consequences of climate change. We call for safe and unhindered humanitarian access and condemn, in the strongest possible terms, attacks on humanitarian and health workers as well as obstacles to humanitarian access. Such crimes will not go unpunished. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is non-negotiable.

We are also concerned by the increase in violence against children. In that regard, we call for the full implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed conflict adopted last August. We reiterate our concern about the draft law on the protection of children currently under consideration. It is not in line with the international and regional legal instruments to which Somalia is a party, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Finally, let me recall that 2021 must be the year of security transition, as called for by the Security Council in resolutions 2520 (2020) and 2540 (2020). We

take note of the transition plan that has been submitted to the Council by Somalia. France also welcomes the independent assessment carried out by General dos Santos Cruz and his team. We support his conclusions that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) must gradually hand over security responsibilities to the Somali armed forces.

France calls for a decision to be taken this year on the role and financing of AMISOM. To that end, all parties must engage in a constructive discussion, first and foremost the African Union and its Peace and Security Council, but also Somalia, the troop-contributing countries and Somalia's financial supporters. In that regard, I recall the commitment of the European Union, which has contributed nearly €2 billion since 2007. It is essential that other countries, especially those with interests in the region, support the Mission financially. France is of course ready to contribute to the success of this discussion.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T. S. Tirumurti

At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan and the Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Francisco Madeira for their briefings on the recent developments in Somalia.

Before I begin, I would like to join others in extending our condolences to the families of the victims of the suicide bombing near the Parliament building and the presidential palace in Mogadishu a week ago, as well as paying tribute to those who lost their lives during the clashes last week.

Having been a member of the Security Council during the early years of its being seized of the situation in Somalia, almost three decades ago, and having played an important role in the United Nations Mission in the country, India is aware of the efforts that the Council has put in over the years to secure lasting peace and stability in Somalia. During the past decade, thanks to the security provided by AMISOM and the critical roles played by the African Union and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, Somalia has made slow but steady progress towards national reconciliation and State-building, despite several shortcomings and setbacks.

Today Somalia is yet again facing a political deadlock, which is threatening the progress achieved in recent years towards attaining stabilization. The political impasse over the holding of elections is indeed disappointing. It has been more than five months since the signing of the agreement on 17 September 2020. Contrary to our expectations, the meeting between the leaders of the federal member states and the Federal Government of Somalia, planned at first for 15 February and then for 18 to 19 February, did not take place. It is important that Somali leaders engage in constructive dialogue to resolve the issues that are delaying the holding of elections. We welcome the 16 February announcement that the technical committee representing the Federal Government and the federal member states identified solutions to outstanding electoral issues and that those have been submitted to the National Consultative Council. We now expect a swift decision by leaders leading to the elections being held soon. We also urge all Somalis not to resort to violence during this important transition and to encourage dialogue and reconciliation instead.

There is little doubt that the longer it takes to hold elections, the more complicated the situation will become. The delay will only embolden Al-Shabaab and other armed groups to gain more ground and continue their terror acts, subverting the democratic gains made so far.

The frequency of terror attacks perpetrated by Al-Shabaab over the past few months is a matter of serious concern. Last week's suicide bombing in Mogadishu reflects the fragile security situation in the country. We strongly condemn these terror attacks. We are also concerned at the increased use of improvised explosive devices by Al-Shabaab and call for support to be extended to the Somali security forces to build their capacity to tackle this menace.

AMISOM has been playing a key role in containing Al-Shabaab in Somalia for several years now. AMISOM remains the rallying point of the international community's efforts for stabilization of the security situation in the country. We commend all AMISOM troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment and for the sacrifices they have made.

We have taken note of the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's independent assessment report in January. We are also encouraged by the priorities

and guideposts laid down in the revised Somalia transition plan. However, Somali security forces and institutions need continued support to tackle Al-Shabaab and other armed groups. We believe that the transition of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali security forces should be carefully calibrated, keeping in mind the realities on the ground. A hasty withdrawal will nullify the progress achieved so far. We also believe that the extension of the AMISOM mandate should not be limited by current funding constraints.

We are deeply concerned at the exacerbating humanitarian situation in Somalia. Sustained conflict and economic instability have been compounded by the triple threat of the coronavirus disease, desert locusts and floods. It is reprehensible that humanitarian workers working under such difficult circumstances are being targeted by Al-Shabaab and its affiliated groups. Access for humanitarian workers remains critical for alleviating the challenges facing the Somali people.

On the piracy front, while there have been no successful piracy attacks off the coast of Somalia recently, the threat has persisted. India has been engaged in combating piracy and ensuring maritime security and safe navigation in the region. The Indian navy has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia continuously since October 2008 and has coordinated with multinational partners to contribute to maritime security and safety for all in the region.

The situation in Somalia calls for sustained engagement with the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states to comprehensively address the multitude of problems in the political, security and humanitarian fields. We acknowledge and extend our support to the efforts of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations in bringing political stability to Somalia and to the Horn of Africa.

India's association with Somalia goes back centuries. India made a significant contribution to peacekeeping in Somalia through its significant involvement in the United Nations Operation in Somalia II, during the 1993-1994 period. Twelve Indian soldiers laid down their lives for keeping the peace in Somalia. India has supported AMISOM in the past and will continue to do so. In recent years, India has extended its support for capacity-building in Somalia. We have supplied essential medicines to the country. Earlier this month, we gifted 27 buses to the Somali Transport Ministry to augment public transport facilities. India remains committed to assisting Somalia on its path towards sustainable peace and stability.

Annex VIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

At the outset I want to express our sincere sympathy to Italy following the violent incident in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which claimed three lives, including that of the Ambassador of Italy. We unreservedly condemn the perpetrators of this brutal attack on a United Nations convoy and express sincere sympathy to our colleagues.

I thank our briefers today for their insightful remarks and welcome Minister Abdirizak.

We have heard today that Somalia stands at a critical juncture. We had hoped that, at today's meeting, we would have been able to congratulate Somalia on successful elections. Instead, the constitutional term of the President of Somalia has ended without agreement on an inclusive political arrangement for an electoral process, which would ensure a peaceful political transition. We regret this.

We are further disappointed that, despite recent commitments, made on 9 February, the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states have yet to come together to resolve the outstanding electoral implementation issues.

I know that Minister Abdirizak agrees with us on this. The longer this political stalemate continues, the further Somalia moves into a state of political uncertainty. In the week when we are due to renew the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the significant gains made in fighting Al-Shabaab are now under threat. The streets of Mogadishu in the past few days rang out with the sound of heavy weaponry, fired not against Al-Shabaab but in pursuit of political advantage. We saw the Federal Government of Somalia deploy security forces against demonstrators. Such violence is unacceptable. It threatens the peace, security and stability of Somalia. It puts civilians at risk.

I urge the leaders of Somalia to put the interests of their people first and immediately re-engage in constructive dialogue. I can do no better than to reiterate the words of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission: the stability of Somalia is at stake. There is a need for dialogue and compromise. As trust among the parties has further diminished in the wake of the violence in Mogadishu, we see the role of the African Union as critical to convening the parties and finding consensus on the implementation of the electoral model agreed on 17 September 2020.

The sustainability of Somalia's political future depends on its being inclusive. Ireland continues to call for a credible and inclusive electoral process that safeguards the freedom of expression and ultimately best serves the national interest. Let me stress in particular that, despite the stressful conditions — perhaps because of them — we once again reiterate the importance of following through and implementing the 30 per cent women's quota throughout the entire process.

AMISOM and the Somali national security forces risk their lives in the line of duty. Too frequently, they make the ultimate sacrifice. We welcome the successes in reducing the number of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which was the result of increased effectiveness of security operations. Equally, the disruption of supply chains and the enforcement of the arms embargo are key in countering IEDs. However, there are still far too many people dying at the hands of Al-Shabaab and others in attacks, such as that on the Afrik Hotel on 31 January. We condemn these in the strongest possible terms.

To move beyond this context, we need to see sustained momentum on Somalia's security transition. There is broad agreement, including around the Council table, on one thing for sure: that we need a phased handover of primary security responsibilities by AMISOM to Somali authorities. This will involve adapting our collective approach to countering the asymmetrical threat of Al-Shabaab, including through the use of non-military means, such as financial disruption. It also means addressing the governance and justice gaps that have created space for Al-Shabaab to continue to extend its reach, including to areas not formally within its control.

The way forward for Somalia's security transition is complex but clear. It involves cooperation among all stakeholders and taking into account the realities on the ground. In this week's renewal of the AMISOM mandate, the Security Council must lay out the path, and the milestones, towards that transition. These should include enhanced Federal Government and federal member state cooperation, agreement on the implementation of the Somalia transition plan, the completion of the African Union independent assessment and progress on force generation, among many other steps. None of that, however, will be possible without political consensus on a way forward for Somalia that addresses underlying divisions in Somali society and puts an end to the political leveraging of Somalia's security personnel and resources. We all have the same goal, and that is a safer Somalia for all Somalis. We must work together to achieve that.

Human rights remain central in our collective consideration of next steps, as must the protection of civilians. Reports of a rise in conflict-related sexual violence, alongside attempts to introduce the regressive sexual intercourse and related crimes bill are of particular concern. Protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence has to be a priority. I join the Secretary-General in calling for the Federal Government to enact the 2018 sexual offences bill and to ensure accountability for perpetrators of sexual violence. The use of arbitrary arrest and detention, including of journalists, is also a concern.

Finally, as outlined by Jim Swan earlier, Somalia faces complex and multifaceted humanitarian challenges, including from looming drought, the ongoing threat of the coronavirus disease and desert locusts. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/154) describes how the number of people in need in Somalia is expected to increase to 5.9 million in 2021. We all have a responsibility to do what we can to assist.

However, the Somali leadership must also recognize that the time spent arguing about election modalities and the use of armed violence is time and resources lost to protecting the lives and livelihoods of Somalis and a drag on building the prosperity and security of the country. I therefore again call on all parties to quickly find consensus on the holding of inclusive elections so that we can put the focus firmly back where it belongs: ensuring the security, safety and health of every Somali citizen.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico condemns in the strongest possible terms the attack in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and expresses its condolences to the families of the victims.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, James Swan, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union, Francisco Madeira, for their briefings on the situation in Somalia, especially on the most recent developments in the political process in the run-up to the elections and on the overall security challenges. We are also grateful for the briefing by Managing Director Rita Laranjinha and welcome the Somali Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Somalia to this meeting.

Mexico regrets that an agreement to resolve the political-electoral impasse was not reached at the recent leaders' meeting in Dhusamareb and that the planned meeting in Mogadishu did not take place either. However, it is good to know that other high-level contacts have yielded results and agreements on some contentious issues. We call on all political actors to continue on the path of dialogue to resolve outstanding differences. It is imperative to avoid violent actions that would jeopardize a possible agreement or the very stability of the country.

The ongoing threat from Al-Shabaab, coupled with the uncontrolled flow of arms into Somali territory, is a lethal combination. Innocent civilians are paying the price. Mexico calls on the Somali authorities to exercise effective control over arms transfers and ensure the effectiveness of the embargo. Without an effective plan to control the scourge of those unrestricted flows, we will see no end to this humanitarian tragedy.

Indeed, we welcome the recent publication of the transition plan, which details the Somali Government's vision for gradually assuming its security responsibilities in coordination with the international community, including the United Nations and the African Union.

At the same time, however, we condemn the deplorable incidence of sexual and gender-based violence referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/154). It is imperative that the perpetrators be punished, and not the victims, whose suffering must be redressed in line with regional standards and international law. Furthermore, we reaffirm the importance of complying with the allocation of at least 30 per cent of seats to women in the electoral committees during the next elections.

The increase in the number of incidents of abduction, killing and mutilation of children, many of them attributed to the federal and state armed forces, is also a matter of concern. Mexico urges all parties to prevent and put an immediate end to such acts and to comply with their obligations under international law. In particular, we urge the Government to expedite the implementation of the action plans to eliminate the killing and maiming of children, as well as the various conclusions of the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict.

The humanitarian situation has become even more complex owing to a second wave of cases of coronavirus disease, the locust infestation and the impacts of floods and droughts. Climate change is an obvious factor that has exacerbated the conflict in Somalia and contributes to food insecurity. The most recent joint technical assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and

the Famine Early Warning Systems Network paints a grim picture: more than 2.6 million people in Somalia are extremely food insecure, and unfortunately that situation is expected to worsen. Urgent and effective measures must therefore be taken to address all those variables in order to alleviate the humanitarian situation and prevent the recurrence of such crises.

Lastly, with regard to the renewal of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia, Mexico is of the view that, while the African Union has role of authority and responsibility in its future, composition and functions, the Security Council has a special responsibility to effectively articulate the interaction between that mission and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, as well as in the broader context of the security situation and capacity-building in Somalia. We hope that the renewal will achieve those synergies, the primary objective of which is the security and stability of Somalia.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I thank the briefers and express special thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Swan and the Special Representative for Somalia of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Madeira, and for their joint efforts to facilitate solutions to the current political and electoral crisis.

Speaking with one voice sends a strong message of a multilateral system committed and ready to support Somalia's efforts moving forward. The Federal Government, the federal member states and other stakeholders should work together and redouble their efforts to reach a consensual solution without delay.

This crisis has already consumed too much political energy that could have been put to better use — advancing social changes, economic development and security. We welcome statements made over the weekend by the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations and encourage even more assertive and coordinated efforts by those actors, including through active facilitation of talks. With reference to the current developments as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/154), let me highlight four key priorities.

First, the Somali Women's Charter provides a solid Somali-led and Somali-owned foundation towards more broad-based and inclusive processes in all reform areas. We strongly believe that supporting the inclusion and empowerment of Somali women should be given higher priority and visibility by the Somali Government, as well as in the mandate and work of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the United Nations. It is positive that the electoral law that was passed in February 2020 stipulates a 30 per cent quota for women in the Federal Parliament. However, there is a need for real political will to ensure such a quota is implementable and for the Somali political leadership to see women's increased political participation as beneficial to the further development and State-building of the country.

Secondly, the updated Somalia transition plan is of key importance to the process of Somalia taking responsibility for its own security. A comprehensive approach to security includes effective and coordinated stabilization efforts as well as addressing the root causes through the national reconciliation process. We would like to underscore the importance of close cooperation and partnership between the African Union and United Nations in order to facilitate a coherent and coordinated international support to the implementation of the Somalia transition plan. A recent study on AMISOM, Somali army and civilian partner intervention in Lower Shabelle highlighted improved cooperation among partners as one of the success factors.

Thirdly, we support Somalia's efforts to ensure that revisions to the provisional Federal Constitution and other legislation be in line with Somalia's international human rights obligations. We strongly urge the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure that any bill addressing current gaps in the legal framework on sexual violence is in line with regional and international obligations and call for the immediate reintroduction of the 2018 sexual offences bill. We also call on the Federal Government of Somalia to enact the widely consulted version of the child rights bill, ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Fourthly, Somalia is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change and extreme weather. It impacts livelihoods, increases displacement and can fuel tensions and disrupt ongoing conflict resolution initiatives. In addressing the

recurrent humanitarian crises in Somalia, we need to strengthen our partnership with the Somali Government in addressing those crises and climate-related security risks by advancing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Going forward, the country will depend on courageous women and men who seek solutions through dialogue and compromise. Norway remains a committed partner with the Somali people and is ready to continue its support to Somali-led and Somali-owned reforms to secure peace, inclusive democracy and development for the people of Somalia.

Annex XI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Francisco Madeira and representative of the European Union Rita Laranjinha for their informative briefings. We welcome the participation in this video-teleconference of Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia Mohamed Abdirizak.

We have closely studied the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/154).

Russia supports the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia in resolving the country's political crisis and setting forth dialogue with the federal member states in order to convene nationwide elections in the near future.

Mogadishu completed a great deal of work in recent months to finalize modalities for the electoral model that was endorsed on 17 September last year. We welcome the rapprochement of the positions of the federal and regional authorities that was achieved earlier this month at a meeting in Dhusamareb, with the technical committee contributing much to that goal. We notice Mogadishu's inexhaustible readiness for dialogue and believe that this process should continue at the negotiation table. However, it should be noted that ultimatums and a lack of commitment to constructive cooperation, as well as internecine conflicts, can strengthen centrifugal trends.

The use of violence is unacceptable. We condemn the outbreaks of confrontation that took place in Mogadishu on 19 February. We call on all sides to the Somali political process to abstain from any unilateral measures and put the interests of the country and its people above all partisan goals. All political forces in the country should unite and demonstrate the much-needed willpower for the sake of preserving peace and stability in Somalia.

Any international assistance to the electoral process must fully respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia and must never interfere in Somalia's internal affairs. Mr. Swan, we count on you proceeding with fair brokerage on that matter.

Against the backdrop of a political crisis, there is an upsurge in terrorist activity by Al-Shabaab — a group that seeks to strengthen its positions while the authorities pay most of their attention to preparing the elections. We call on Somalia and the peacekeepers to not cease their efforts in combating extremists.

We proceed from the understanding that the African peacekeeping mission remains a key element of Somalia's security. We welcome the results that the Federal Government achieved recently in taking over the responsibility for national security from AMISOM. We expect the African Union to adopt corresponding decisions in this regard. When addressing the extension of the AMISOM mandate, which is pending at the end of this month, it is important to take into account the opinions of regional actors that are directly involved in maintaining peace and security in the country. In general, we are convinced that any decisions with regard to African peacekeepers need to account for the position of Mogadishu and the progress in training the Somali National Army, as well as building a nationwide security architecture. Attempts to enforce a drawdown of AMISOM are unacceptable.

In conclusion, let me underscore Russia's firm commitment to the effective work of the Security Council aimed at resolving the current political crisis in Somalia.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia, the three African States members of the Security Council, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

At the outset, we would like to convey our thanks to the Secretary-General and to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for their respective reports on the situation in Somalia. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSO), Mr. James Swan, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Mr. Francisco Madeira and the Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service, Ms. Rita Laranjinha, for their briefings.

We also would like to recognize the participation of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Somalia, at this meeting.

Our statement will focus on the political developments and the preparations for the elections, the security situation, with particular attention to the role of AMISOM, and the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

The A3+1 reaffirms its full support for a safe, peaceful and orderly transition in Somalia based on the constitutional order, the rule of law and human rights, and an unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Somalia. The A3+1 regrets that the electoral agreement reached by the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states on 17 September 2020, which was subsequently adopted by both houses of Parliament, has yet to be fully implemented. As a result, the parliamentary elections that were expected to take place by the end of 2020 as well as the election of the Speakers of the two houses of Parliament and the President, which were to be held by 8 February 2022, have yet to take place, leading to heightened tensions and political uncertainties.

We deeply regret the violent incidents and the reported casualties last Friday in Mogadishu. While reaffirming the right to peaceful demonstration, we call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid any escalation. We encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to continue with their ongoing dialogue, guided by the spirit of consensus and readiness for compromise, with a view to reaching an agreement on the remaining outstanding issues. In that regard, we welcome the formation of a technical team at the ministerial level between the Federal Government and the federal member states for that purpose, which convened its first meeting on 15 February.

We underline the vital importance of holding free, fair, timely, transparent and credible elections in Somalia so as to realize its legitimate aspirations to security, stability, democracy, good governance and development. In that regard, we call upon all the relevant Somali stakeholders to refrain from undertaking any unilateral or non-consensual measures that might further complicate the situation.

At the same time, we call for the renewed commitment of Somalia's partners to providing timely and adequate support to the Government of Somalia in order to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a successful and peaceful manner. We also hope that the agreement reached between the leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states on the 30 per cent quota for women will be upheld and that it will pave the way to the greater

representation and participation by women in future. We welcome in this respect the endorsement by the Federal Government of the Somali Women's Charter, which set a 50 per cent representation target for women. We also welcome the formation by the Federal Government of Somalia of a technical committee to prepare a road map for one-person, one-vote universal elections in 2024 and 2025 and encourage thorough consultations with the federal member states and other stakeholders for its rapid adoption.

The A3+1 remains deeply concerned about the volatile security situation in Somalia. We strongly condemn the latest terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al-Shabaab and express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and the Government of Somalia. We also profoundly regret the loss of civilian lives and pay tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by AMISOM and Somali security forces personnel in the fight against terrorism.

The A3+1 shares the view that Al-Shabaab remains the most immediate threat to the stability and security of Somalia, having evolved over the years from a primarily military threat to the survival of the Somali State to a terrorist, hybrid and asymmetrical threat. We also agree that, despite the progress achieved so far, Somalia still needs international support to fight against Al-Shabaab and help build State capacity until it is able to take full responsibility for its own security. In particular, given the hybrid terrorist threat posed by Al-Shabaab, increased resources should be devoted to developing and enhancing capabilities such as efforts to counter improvised explosive devices as well as counter-terrorism intelligence and operations.

The A3+1 furthermore believes that Al-Shabaab cannot be defeated by military means alone. Greater efforts should be made to diminish Al-Shabaab's access to financing, tackle its ability to recruit and radicalize and counter its extremist propaganda. The promotion of the rule of law, justice and human rights, State-building, governance, economic development, institutional capacity-building and the extension of State authority through inclusive politics and reconciliation are also necessary for the eventual permanent defeat of Al-Shabaab. In that regard, the A3+1 encourages the Federal Government of Somalia to expedite the finalization of the revised Somalia transition plan as an inclusive Somali-owned and Somali-led process between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states. We look forward to the plan being considered and endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council as the basis for the AU's continued commitment and contribution to the peace and security of Somalia, with the support of international partners.

While renewing our appreciation for the sustained contributions of the United Nations through UNSOM, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the United Nations Mine Action Service, and of other international partners to bring peace, security and stability to Somalia, we, as the A3+1, would like to focus more specifically on the role that AMISOM and the Somali security forces are playing.

We note that the independent assessment of international support to the whole security environment in Somalia post-2021, which was submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General in January 2021, concluded that a reconfigured AMISOM is the most viable option for providing an international security operation capable of protecting the Somali State and international partners, disrupting Al-Shabaab and other threats and operating in support of the Somali security forces.

Confirming what the A3+1 and the African Union have been stating for a long time now, the independent assessment underscored that, compared to similar-sized

United Nations stabilization operations, AMISOM is underfunded, and that the continuation of the United Nations support package through UNSOS and additional support through the European Union (EU), other willing donors and the AMISOM trust fund should be a minimum prerequisite. It added that the optimal solution would be United Nations-assessed contribution funding for a reconfigured AMISOM. The report also pointed to a sense of unfairness stemming from the fact that the African troops deployed to AMISOM receive only 70 per cent of the stipends of those deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations where they face considerably less risk, concluding that the current situation undermines the morale and effectiveness of the mission.

In its communiqué of 9 February 2021, the AU Peace and Security Council welcomed the envisaged reconfiguration of AMISOM with increased collaboration with the Somali security forces. It urged the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to expedite the force-generation processes to enhance the capabilities of the Somali security forces to required levels that will enable AMISOM's reconfiguration to be completed to adequately support the key priorities of the Somalia transition plan.

At the same time, the Peace and Security Council appealed to the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to avail the space necessary for the Federal Government of Somalia, in close collaboration with the African Union, to lead the discussions on the post-2021 international engagement with Somalia, in line with the Somalia transition plan.

The A3+1 believes that the Security Council should heed this appeal from the African Union and refrain from pronouncing on any possible arrangements beyond 2021 until the AU-led independent assessment is finalized, which is expected in May 2021. Accordingly, the A3+1 is ready to support the proposed 10-month renewal of the authorization for AMISOM, on the understanding, however, that no change to the Mission's mandate or the current troop ceiling would be made for the time being.

We welcome the efforts made by the Government of Somalia to promote the justice system and fight corruption through the establishment of the Judicial Service Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, and we encourage it to take the steps necessary to further promote and protect human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls, freedom of speech and access to information. We strongly condemn reported incidents of civilian casualties, conflict-related sexual violence — which continues to disproportionately affect women and girls — grave violations against children, including abduction, recruitment and use, killing and maiming, all of which have been recorded during the period under review. We reiterate that more effective measures must be taken to prevent these violations consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We underline the importance of identifying the perpetrators of these crimes and holding them accountable.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains deeply concerning. The interconnecting challenges of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, devastating floods and other hazards of climate change and the desert locust infestation have resulted in increased displacements and more people in need of humanitarian assistance. The rise in acute food insecurity and malnourishment, including among children, is particularly troubling.

With 5.9 million people projected to require humanitarian assistance in 2021, we call on international partners to scale up funding in order to support the humanitarian response plans and alleviate the suffering of the Somali people. We regret that the security situation remains a major constraint on humanitarian

operations, and we strongly condemn the continued violent incidents against humanitarian operations and providers.

We commend AMISOM for its humanitarian assistance efforts, including its assistance to health-care workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it imposes on population movements in Somalia. We call for additional dedicated international support, including funding and required resources, to enable AMISOM to support humanitarian efforts more effectively in all its sectors.

In conclusion, the A3+1 would like to reiterate its appreciation for the continued efforts of the United Nations, the AU, the EU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and all international partners in support of a Somali-led and Somali-owned process of building security, reconciliation and peace in the country.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Barbara Woodward**

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would first like to express our condolences to the Government of Italy and to the World Food Programme (WFP) following the attack on the WFP convoy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo earlier today, which resulted in the deaths of three people, including the Italian Ambassador. Our thoughts are with their families and those who were injured.

Turning to the subject of Somalia, I would like to start by thanking our briefers today.

The United Kingdom strongly condemns the terror attacks launched by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu in recent weeks. As the prospect of national elections draws closer, such incidents have increased, which is a clear attempt to destabilize and disrupt the process. We express our condolences to the families of victims and stand in solidarity with Somalia in its fight against terrorism.

The United Kingdom welcomes the agreement reached by the technical committee on 16 February on the implementation of the electoral process in line with the 17 September agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, which is the only legitimate basis for elections.

We are concerned by the violent clashes in Mogadishu on 19 February. Somalia's leaders must arrive at a consensus on the implementation of the electoral process without delay. That requires that all parties demonstrate flexibility. It is vital that inclusive national elections take place as soon as possible. Any alternative outcomes, including partial elections or any unilateral actions that lack broad agreement, will not receive support from the international community, risking further violence and greater instability.

The timely delivery of the electoral process would also allow Somalia's leaders to refocus on the critical issues that require urgent attention, such as the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The United Nations has made an appeal for \$1 billion in 2021. Millions of Somalis are experiencing severe food insecurity. The United Nations estimates the number of people in humanitarian need will increase to 5.9 million by the end of 2021.

Concerted support from the international community is essential to supporting Somalia's long-term stability. Our partners in the African Union and the troop-contributing countries to the African Union Mission in Somalia have made huge sacrifices in supporting Somalia as it works to retake control of its own security. The United Kingdom looks forward to constructive dialogue among members of the Security Council towards agreeing on a mandate that sets a path towards greater Somali leadership on security.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize three points. First, it is vital that the Federal Government and the federal member states reach an agreement to ensure dialogue in order that the delivery of credible and inclusive elections is ensured. Secondly, longer-term cooperation between the Federal Government and the federal member states is essential to addressing issues critical to Somalia's stability, security and development. Finally, the continued support of the international community is crucial to realizing long-term peace and security in Somalia.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Acting Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank Special Representative Swan for his summary of the latest developments in Somalia. The United States also greatly appreciates the comments and analysis from the other briefers this morning.

As many of the speakers before me have said, we meet here today at a critical time for Somalia, as the country both approaches an imminent political transition that will determine the country's leadership for the next four years and it prepares for a security transition that will begin to take shape starting next year. Our remarks on Somalia over the past several months in the Security Council have focused on the need for Somalia's leadership to seize the opportunity before them and make concerted efforts to advance peace and security for Somalia's people. This is now clearly most urgent and most apparent with respect to the lack of an agreed way forward on national elections.

Uncertainty over the elections has stymied the national dialogue on critical political, economic and security reforms. The eruption of political violence on the streets of Mogadishu last week is the latest indication that, if not resolved soon, Somalia risks regressing deeper into instability.

The United States firmly opposes the use of violence by any party. We call on President Farmajo and Somalia's federal member state leaders to act swiftly to resolve the political impasse that threatens the country's future and to find agreement to allow parliamentary and presidential elections to be conducted immediately. The technical committee's 16 February recommendations provide a clear framework for resolving the impasse. We urge all political leaders to endorse the recommendations and begin implementing them as a matter of urgency.

Let me be clear: partial, parallel or alternative election processes, including prolonged interim governing arrangements, would only further increase prospects for instability and be a major setback for Somalia. A timely and peaceful political transition and renewed commitment between the Federal Government and the federal member states to working together are needed for Somalia to adequately address the many tasks it faces.

Fighting Al-Shabaab remains an urgent priority, as we have heard. Later this week, the Security Council will consider again extending the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which has been vital to the progress Somalia has achieved over the past decade.

But lasting stability requires Somali forces capable of providing for their own security. We welcome the updated Somalia transition plan and see it as a step towards the transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM. It will be imperative that the Federal Government devote the political and financial resources necessary for its successful implementation.

In addition to developing security forces that can take the fight to terrorists, more must be done to cut off the resources that those groups use to fund their deadly attacks. We look forward to continuing to support the Somali authorities' efforts to expand their own counter-terrorist financing authorities and capabilities.

The United States remains focused on limiting the ability of Al-Shabaab to conduct attacks against civilians and is committed to partnering with Member States to utilize the sanctions regime under resolution 751 (1992) to its fullest extent.

To that end, we are proud to note that today we joined with the Federal Government of Somalia in co-nominating three senior Al-Shabaab leaders, Abukar Ali Adan, Maalim Ayman and Mahad Karate, to the 751 Somalia sanctions list. These designations demonstrate that the international community will hold accountable those who undermine Somalia's peace, security and stability. We welcome co-sponsorships, which would serve as an expression of the Security Council's unity in condemning Al-Shabaab and its violence.

Consistent and united support from Somalia's neighbours and other international partners for reform and stabilization remains imperative. It is incumbent on all of us to remain focused on Somalia's stabilization and to avoid the pursuit of narrow interests that work counter to this long-term strategic goal.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

I warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, to our meeting today. I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Swan, Mr. Madeira and Ms. Laranjinha for their informative briefings and for their work on the ground at this very challenging time.

The 17 September 2020 agreement on a national electoral process was a remarkable achievement in Somalia. While we acknowledge the several positive developments that have been achieved as well as the advances that have been generated by the agreement, it is regrettable that we have yet to see its full implementation. Only through continued dialogue in a spirit of unity and cooperation can Somalia tackle the political, security and humanitarian challenges facing it. Therefore, we continue to call on all relevant parties to redouble their efforts in delivering on their commitments.

With regard to the matters under discussion today, I would like to touch on the following points.

First, on national unity, we are following closely the ongoing situation in Somalia. We are deeply concerned about the heavy gunfire and clashes last Friday between the opposition and the security forces. Somalis are longing for peace, stability and development in their country, and it is time to listen to that legitimate aspiration.

We therefore call on all relevant parties to refrain from any acts that might plunge Somalia into chaos and jeopardize peace and security in the country. We would also like to stress the importance of national unity and reconciliation for Somalia on the way forward.

Secondly, on the election process, we commend the efforts undertaken by the leaders of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states in dialogue on the agreed electoral process. However, we regret that the recent talks between the Federal Government and the federal member states have failed to reach consensus on the outstanding issues.

In that connection, we call upon the Government, the federal member states and political parties to set aside their differences and to make further efforts to engage in inclusive dialogue to reach political consensus on the implementation of the 17 September electoral model, with the modalities and timing of the elections acceptable to all Somali stakeholders, who include 30 per cent of the political representation of women and minorities. We also call on the United Nations and the international community to increase their financial and technical assistance to the Somali Government to achieve that goal.

Thirdly, on resilience for security, we strongly condemn the violence and recent terrorist attacks, including those using improvised explosive devices, and high-profile suicide attacks against civilians and Government officials as well as the Somali National Army and AMISOM forces. The perpetrators of those violent acts must be brought to justice.

We welcome the transition of security responsibility to Somali ownership. We support the operations carried out by the Somali security forces, AMISOM and international partners against Al-Shabaab. In that regard, we call upon international partners to maintain their support for the Somali security forces through training, equipment provision and capacity-building.

Last but not least, on socioeconomic development, a number of long-standing threats and challenges, including desert locusts, floods and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, have had negative impacts on a large number of Somalis, who were already vulnerable owing to chronic poverty and conflict. The risk of exponential infection by COVID-19 also remains high across the country.

In that connection, we call on international partners to assist the Federal Government of Somalia in alleviating the socioeconomic impacts caused by those threats. We cannot emphasize enough the need to address the deep-rooted economic issues facing Somalia, especially in the area of agricultural development. Only with such assistance can the Government and the people of Somalia overcome their long-term challenges and strive for sustained stability and security.

Before concluding, we would like to commend the unceasing work and untiring efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations country team in Somalia. We would also like to reiterate our full support for the promotion of peace, stability and development in Somalia.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud**

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February and to wish you and your delegation success. I also commend the Permanent Representative of the brotherly country of Tunisia for his exemplary leadership at the helm of the Council last month.

I acknowledge the presence of Mr. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; Mr. Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia; and Ms. Rita Laranjinha, European External Action Service Managing Director for Africa, and thank them for their briefings.

It is a great honour to be addressing the Security Council on Somalia's progress and remaining challenges. Security Council members, alongside the majority of other partner nations within the United Nations family, continue to play an important role in Somalia's development alongside our resilient people and Government, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The Somali Government takes note of the report of the Secretary-General, António Guterres, on the situation in Somalia (S/2021/154), which was presented to the Security Council today. The report captures succinctly the political, security and socioeconomic challenges that the Somali nation must overcome in order to continue on our path to deepening democracy, development, stability and security for Somalia.

It is important to note that the Somali people will be forever indebted for the support and multifaceted partnerships that continue to contribute to our national progress, especially as we navigate forward to a better future, a bright and confident future anchored in the undying belief that we are the masters of our own destiny.

On the present political impasse on the implementation of the 17 September agreement, context is important. The Federal Government of Somalia has worked consistently in a determined manner to hold a federal election as stipulated by the provisional Constitution. It should be noted that soon after the commencement of this Administration, work to implement the holding of one-person, one-vote elections began simply in order to ensure the widest participation of citizens in the process of choosing their leaders for the first time in 50 years.

A practical model for realizing that goal was designed and negotiated with the federal member states before they and the Federal Government of Somalia signed an agreement in 2018. I am very much aware of this because I led the negotiations on behalf of the Federal Government and as a member of the federal negotiation technical committee, working closely with the federal member states.

After that agreement, a draft law was formulated by the executive branch based on the agreement and was presented to the Federal Parliament for legislative scrutiny and voted on before the President signed it into law in February 2020.

As stipulated by both the political agreement and the subsequent election law, the process was to be led by the National Independent Electoral Commission. However, within a short period the leaders of the federal member states reneged on the early agreement on one-person, one-vote elections and instead expressed a preference for a selection model similar to the one used in 2016, where the leadership

of the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states in effect choose the members of both houses of the Federal Parliament, who would then become the electors of the President and speakers.

The selective process has rightfully earned the label of an incubator for levels of corruption, irregularities and patronage favoured by elites, whose sole interest is to hold the future of Somalia to ransom and maintain patronage for the few.

Despite the moral and political imperative to implement the agreed election model, Somalia's international partners pressured the Government to compromise with the federal member states once again, as a result of a series of consultations with the leadership of the federal member states held in Dhuusamarreeb, known as the Dhuusamarreeb conference 1, 2 and 3.

A final meeting of the National Consultative Council in Mogadishu reached a political agreement on the new modalities of election on 17 September 2020. It is to be noted that the Federal Government, in agreeing to that selected model, has not only compromised on one-person, one-vote elections but also agreed to the following, as demanded by the federal member states.

For each seat, the Federal Government of Somalia wanted 301 individuals to vote for each respective parliamentary seat, but the federal member states wanted 101; the Government agreed.

The Federal Government proposed that elections should be held in up to four or a minimum of three locations in each federal member state in order to seek greater legitimization of the new Parliament; the federal member state leaders wanted two locations, and the Federal Government once again accepted their wish.

The penholders of that agreement were the federal member state leaders, in particular the Presidents of Jubaland and Puntland, and led to the agreement being welcomed, celebrated and endorsed by all prospective presidential candidates, the federal member state leaders, the international community and all relevant political actors.

Regrettably, after all that, the penholders of the agreement have continued to refuse to implement the political agreement, requesting further concessions one after another to address perceived concerns with regard to the Gedo region and the election committees. That was also accepted by the Federal Government, and a technical committee representing all stakeholders, including ministerial representatives from both Jubaland and Puntland, finalized the outstanding issues in Baydhabo on 16 February.

After two days of discussions, the Baidao technical committee announced an agreement that was welcomed by all, including the international community, and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" extended an invitation to the federal member state leaders to meet at the National Consultative Council on 18 February in Mogadishu to conclude the Federal Government of Somalia/federal member state technical committee's work and fully implement the 17 September agreement, so that the process of elections could begin without further delay.

Regrettably, the two federal member state leaders, who were the penholders for the 17 September political agreement and have remained a constant obstacle to its finalization, once again refused to attend the meeting, once again choosing to hold to ransom the aspirations of the Somali people for stability in an effort to achieve a transition in an undemocratic manner.

In fact, rather than travel to Mogadishu to attend the planned National Consultative Council's meeting, the two federal member state leaders chose to offer

tacit support for a planned protest by prospective presidential candidates, which the Federal Government accepted provided that it adheres to public health regulations and is held in a peaceful manner, as our Constitution stipulates.

The Government fully recognizes the right to peacefully demonstrate as a right guaranteed by the Constitution. We are committed to providing the Somali people with the opportunity to express themselves and their demands without undermining public order or destroying public or private property.

However, the prospective presidential candidates not only disregarded the Government's measures but chose a clear path of illegality and insurrection. They chose to bring forth a militia out on to the streets of Mogadishu; in fact, the head of that militia openly stated in public "there is no Government, and we are taking control".

That is no surprise, because on the night of 8 February the opposition group leaders declared that there was no Government in Somalia, which is not true given that Parliament passed the election law based on the political agreement, which, under article 3, clearly states that the legislative and executive branches of Government have full authority; furthermore, the executive is responsible for managing the election precisely in order to avoid a vacancy of power.

Those acts have led to the loss of the lives of members of our security personnel, who have taken an oath to protect the Somali nation from enemies, both foreign and domestic. I extend my condolences and the gratitude of the nation to their families and loved ones and wish those injured a speedy recovery.

The Somali people are tired of war and yearning for stability, security and a Government that truly represents their aspirations. Key to achieving that is the holding of free and fair elections, as agreed by all the parties on 17 September and finalized by the Baydhabo technical committee no more than a week ago.

Denying the truth does not change the facts, and I am afraid that what we have here is an opposition whose only interest, at the behest of external forces, is to create a red herring based on the fact that their sole political goal has always been to cause a political crisis in order to foment constitutional disorder. The fact is that the only way to have a political transition is through elections, not threats or outlandish claims of political and social regression to a painful era to which the Somali people will never agree to return.

The simple truth is that no number of undemocratic calls for the removal of a sitting president without elections, the foreign axis of instability supporting the opposition or the threat of violence will determine the destiny of the Somali nation.

Somalia's destiny will be determined by the Somali people, who have the confidence, experience and resolve to ensure that what lies ahead for Somalia will never be the pain of the past.

Unfortunately, the Somali Federal Government strongly believes that there is blatant foreign interference in the internal political affairs of Somalia, from those who claim to be helping to stabilize Somalia to those who offer a princely reward in order to intentionally sabotage and prolong the electoral process in the hope of leadership change.

That axis of foreign influence clearly has a strategy of prolonging the holding of elections by forcing the remaining two federal member state leaders to refuse the agreement in order to provide space for prospective presidential candidates, in an attempt to create a narrative of discord. Just today, the prospective presidential candidates announced the holding of a demonstration next Friday, clearly timed to coincide with this meeting in the hope of instilling a fear of Armageddon.

Rest assured, the prospective presidential candidates have been, and will continue to be, provided the freedom and political space to express their views, and Government bodies as well as security forces will fulfil their statutory duty to protect the public against the dark forces of extremism and the silent enemy of the pandemic as they express their views openly. However, the security and well-being of the Somali people will remain paramount, and no armed insurrection under the guise of a political demonstration will be accepted.

There is no doubt that elections will happen once the final two federal member state leaders endorse the finalization of the 17 September agreement negotiated by their respective technical representatives. Upon the agreement of those two federal member state leaders, the Federal Government of Somalia will be willing and able to begin the holding of the elections within the month.

The President of Somalia once again invites the leaders of Puntland and Jubaland to join the consultative meeting in Mogadishu to finalize the recommendations of the technical committee. The completion of the electoral process based on dialogue and compromise is vital for the peace and prosperity of the Somali people.

On security developments, defeating Al-Shabaab remains Somalia's key security priority. We have been engaged in a successful fight against a determined international terrorist organization with regional and global ambition. Thanks to the courage and sacrifices of the Somali National Army and the troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Al-Shabaab has been reduced to carrying out opportunistic attacks on soft targets. Many plots to kill innocent people have been foiled and many Al-Shabab operatives have been killed, captured or arrested.

Despite the courage of AMISOM soldiers in Somalia, it is imperative that we continue to work with our international partners to nurture and develop a well-trained, equipped and funded Somali National Army and Police Force to protect our citizens and contribute to the strengthening of regional stability. We are thankful to all partners that are actively assisting us in working towards and realizing that fundamental goal.

Indeed, year 2021 will be a pivotal one for Somalia. We have completed and revised Somalia's transition plan, which was welcomed by the Security Council and lays out a clear path for Somalia to transition security away from AMISOM to Somali security forces. It is important that AMISOM be fit for purpose and able to meet the present challenges, by which we mean, first, the realization of a reconfigured AMISOM force that is more mobile and agile enough to support the offensive capabilities of Somali security forces; secondly, a move away from a single sector presence of forces from troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to a mix TCC force presence in all sectors to improve command and control; and, finally, greater coordination and joint operations between AMISOM and Somali security forces to enable Somali leadership. To put it simply, the upcoming AMISOM concept of operations must effectively reflect the aim of the Somali transition plan.

With regard to economic development, the Somali Federal Government has prioritized economic reforms to ease the unsustainable national debt burden on the Somali people. Through great national effort and in partnership with bilateral and multilateral partners, Somalia completed successive economic reform programmes, guided by the International Monetary Fund, to reach the decision point under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in early 2020. That was a huge achievement, which is now followed by a follow-on programme — the Extended Credit Facility — which continues to build on the foundations of strengthening public finance management, raising domestic revenue towards fiscal sustainability and managing expenditures to a sustainable level, good governance and financial sector reforms.

Moreover, we have put in place laws and regulations to institutionalize good governance and sustainable economic management to cement the economic reforms. We are determined to remain on the right reform trajectory to reach the completion point and hopefully attain complete debt forgiveness. That, coupled with the lessons we have learned and the systems and processes we have built through the economic reform journey, should lead Somalia on the road to sustainable development, opportunity and prosperity.

Alongside the political, security and economic progress presented so far, Somalia has also been making steady progress in the State-building process, particularly through the constitutional review process and the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Somalia has also been effectively responding to the triple threat of locusts, flooding and the global coronavirus disease pandemic, which continues to have a severe impact on the health and economic stability of Somalia and its people. Somalia continues to call for global solidarity and equitable access to vaccines at this extremely difficult and vulnerable time for all populations.

In conclusion, Somalia has truly come a very long way on a journey in which many thought it would not make it past the first few hurdles. Somalia's economic success is the fruit of the collective efforts of the Somali Government, its people and our valuable international partners. The Somali people are resilient and committed to building a better future for themselves of which they can be proud.

As for politics, Somalia's political process has developed from the period in which it was initiated and developed by international partners. However, since 2012, and in particular the past four years, Somali leaders have dealt with complex political issues without the supervision of the international community. That, in turn, has made the Somali people have confidence in their governance and their leaders. And despite recent events, the President's invitation to the remaining two federal member state leaders stands.

Because rebuilding an inclusive, progressive and prosperous Somalia is fundamental for all Somalis, it is the commitment of this Government to honour that noble objective by delivering free and fair elections, while continuing to safeguard the physical health and financial future of the Somali People.
